

A Serial of Instruction Inviting Grave Research, No. 5.

The abridged epitome relative to the Holsinger case referred to in my last letter, was only to show the remarkable elasticity the human conscience can attain under long training and when an extraordinary emergency seems to demand it. A large majority knew that the whole thing from its inception to its ratification was a farce to reach an end regardless of the necessary means. Holsinger never assailed the doctrines of Christ; never antagonized the teachings of the Gospel; never assailed the practices of the church as it existed under apostolic regulations, or under the primitive system revived by Mack and co-workers, but untiringly defended them in public and private. But with the Gospel, and in the name of primitive Christianity he rebuked the additions incessantly appended to the sacred scriptures, and denominated "the order," and "the usages" of the church, and for this he was charged with transgression, and expelled without a trial, as previously chronicled.

A fine analysis of the case, will expose the fact that the peculiar institution known as annual meeting was a convenient instrument for the manufacture of popularity for those who paid much devotion to it, and the probability of official dethronement was the true motive for decapitating possible rivals. As in all similar worldly institutions, the methods to be employed were wholly secondary to the end sought.

Now that a desperate work was accomplished at the expense of every sense of delicacy and Christian deportment, and the general prejudice was wrought up to the proper working point, and as the credit of the church was as low on the virtue of fairness as it could get, two other duties were apparent before the mercy of time would be sued to mellow down and hide in forgetfulness the desperate measures so essential to the supremacy of church dogmas.

The next duty was to muzzle the press and free speech with an iron hand and the following "advice" was given: that any "laymember, elder, teacher, deacon or printer, who will speak, preach, write, or publish anything disrespectful against the doctrine, order, custom, or usages of the general church, is an offender against the general Brotherhood," \* \* \* "and if he will not acknowledge his offense through the same medium he uttered his offence, and promise to do so no more, the church shall expel him." The term "disrespectfully" was merged into reproachfully, and so limited as to allow a member to "express his opinion with Christian courtesy."

The whole measure, however, was as Popish as the law would allow, and the discussion that followed disclosed the intense and illy concealed yearning for enlarged power to convert the church into an absolute monarchy as far as practicable.

The definition of the term reproachful was a mere catch penny, for the final tribunal allowed to decide between "reproach" and "courtesy" has powers as large as the exigency might demand, and judging by the past, that discretion can be made just as sweeping as the desirableness of expulsion may seem apparent.

Then, to rivet the iron collar of submission upon the subjects while in the august presence of annual meeting, a drum head committee was provided to arrest and expel any member, if necessary, should he forget his dignity and speak reproachfully against annual meeting. You will discover that there was no provision prohibiting annual meeting from transacting reproachful business, however.

Not only was the provision under discussion that tallied so exactly with the edicts of Geo. III of England when his ire was aroused against our forefathers, but the spirit of it was so identical with that of the said Geo. III, that a brief chapter read from American history of a few years later date would have been a true prophecy.

You will observe how much Gospel and how much "advice" it took to constitute the German Baptist church as early as June 1882-

No one dared write, preach or speak against the "doctrine, order, custom, or usages," without expulsion. The "doctrine" is the gift of God, the "order, custom, and usages," the gifts of annual meeting. Relatively speaking, they are three to

one, or one fourth Gospel, and three-fourths traditions of the elders. The penalty is no severer, however, for violating the traditions, than for violating the doctrine of the church, neither are they exalted above the doctrine of the church, for which, thanks to a commendable spirit of meekness on the part of annual meeting, or the lack of power, or something of that kind. And when I say the orders, customs, and usages are not placed higher than the doctrine of the church, and the penalty provided for their infringement is made no severer than Christ provided for the infringement of His laws, I say it understandingly. But don't imagine annual meeting one whit behind, for her laws are made exactly equal to the laws of God, and her penalty the identical penalty that God ordained for punishing refractory members in His church militant. This being the case, it makes annual meeting equal to God in a two-fold degree:

- 1.—It makes her advice equal to God's law in quality, and certainly in quantity; and,
- 2.—It makes the infraction of either bear the same penalty.

The next and concluding act in the drama was to change from advice to mandatory law. It was easily done for all it needed now was the name. However, there was a revolutionary principle inherent in the act that must not be overlooked.

Previously, the church only gave advice, even though she recommended expulsion in case her advice was not meekly accepted. But the principle alluded to is this:

The "leading brethren" composing the conference of 1882, were chosen by the several church districts to go to Arnold's Grove and make advice simply this and nothing more. Anything beyond that was usurpation and treason. They were delegated just so far and no farther. After convening they transformed themselves into a mandate making body without the consent of their constituents. This made them both autocrats and traitors to their trust. Of course, all who saw fit to follow them into their new role, were at liberty to do so; but their unauthorized revolution severed the allegiance of all who did not desire to follow or sustain the usurpation. This proposition I submit with all gravity to a candid world, fearless of a contradiction from any intelligent source. Neither those delegates nor the undelegated throng that participated in, and effected the revolution, were ever clothed with any properly constituted authority, and hence, those who did not follow in the revolutionary work, are not rebels, but the true conservators of the church, and released lawfully from any further allegiance to the revolutionary body.

A Peep in the Council Meeting.

BY J. H. WORST.

"Brother Samuel, the church has decided that you must make an humble confession, and promise to do so no more."

"But I am conscientious and do not believe that I did wrong."

"Still you must acknowledge that you are sorry for saying that you believe the 'minutes' are opposed to the Gospel."

"I did not say that."

"Well, its all the same; you said 'the Gospel is opposed to the minutes, and many of the brethren feel hurt and have decided that you must make an acknowledgement to the church.'"

"How can I when I am not sorry. I said it, and still say it after thorough investigation. I believe as I live that it is the truth and nothing but the truth. My conscience will not allow me to make an acknowledgement until I am convinced of my error."

"Come, brother Samuel, nothing short of an acknowledgement will heal the brethren's wounded feelings. While you were out doors the church solemnly decided that you must say that you are sorry, and we are now waiting for you to do so. Don't be stubborn and delay the council."

"But I am not sorry. I believe the 'minutes' are an addition to the Gospel, and as such are condemned by the Revelator, John, and by the whole tenor of the Gospel. Now do you ask me

to tell a downright falsehood to satisfy the brethren?"

"But the church has made her decision."

"And that decision will make me a liar; will cause me to openly violate the Gospel and moral principle. 'Lie not one to another.' Does the church insist that I shall now publicly proclaim a lie and violate plain Gospel and my moral integrity for her gratification?"

"Come, brother Samuel, don't be stubborn. Yes, yes, it will satisfy the aggrieved members and settle this difficulty."

"Just make the confession, brother Samuel, and stop this; you know it is their decision."

"But their decision asks me to tell a lie, and 'The devil is the father of lies.' Are you going to allow the devil to father the confession you seek to extort from me?"

"For shame, brother Samuel, how dare you say so. Beware of the consequences."

"One question, please. Is there any power on earth that will prompt or force a man to tell a lie, but the power of the devil? And what are you doing but asking me, yes trying to force me to tell a lie; a willful, deliberate falsehood, for I aver that I told the truth. I cannot be sorry for telling the truth, or what I believe to be the truth."

"Brother Samuel, it is getting late, and we cannot wait much longer. There are several cases to attend to yet after your case is settled."

"If nothing but a falsehood will satisfy the church, I cannot gratify her desire. I am willing to do anything honorable for the sake of peace, but to say I am sorry when I am not sorry,—never. I would consider it a dishonorable act, and a plain violation of Christian duty."

"Then I will have to submit your case to the church. You can now retire and all the near relatives may also retire while I take the council of the church."

"Will nothing satisfy the aggrieved members but a confession, and one, too, that is a palatable lie on my part?"

"They have decided that you must make an humble acknowledgement."

"Well I can't do it now, I would have to be convinced of error first."

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"Brother Samuel, the church has decided that they can no longer hold you as a member, and have disowned you for 'not hearing the church.' The Gospel says, 'Hear the church.'"

"Does it say so?"

"It says, if he will not hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican." It is therefore my painful duty to tell you that you are now disowned."

"I am not satisfied with that construction of the Gospel, and—"

"Silence, Samuel, you are no longer one of us and have no right to be heard in the council, and —"

"Yes, yes, it is too late now, and—"

"He would't hear the church, and now—"

"Come, come, brethren, let us get at other business. What next?"

"Just one word and then I will leave you. Why am I charged with saying that the Gospel is opposed to the 'minutes' and expelled for stubbornness or not hearing the church. Why not say that I am expelled for saying that I believe the Gospel is opposed to the 'minutes.' That would be the truth."

"Come, now Samuel, retire peaceably. I see the brethren are shaking their heads and desire to drop this. If you want to come back to the church the door that is now closed can be opened for you again, if you come in the right spirit."

"I will now retire. I have but done my duty and can hardly realize that a body professing to be followers of Christ can ask a man to tell a falsehood, then expel him for not telling it, then record one by saying I was expelled for not hearing the church. Verily the Gospel says, 'lie not;' the church, governed by the 'minutes' says, 'you must lie' and 'The devil was a liar from the beginning' and 'the father of lies.' So I am expelled for not telling a lie to satisfy the brethren. Farewell."